

Introduction

Welcome to the 2nd issue of the Gills Bridge Creek Community Newsletter. Following on from the first issue published in July, this issue will provide an update on the work commenced and undertaken since then as well as providing some information on planned work to come. If you would like to find out further information about the project or would like to become involved please contact Sustainable Development Services at Kempsey Shire Council on 6566 3200.

Appointment of Environmental Project Officer



Council has recently appointed Allister Gee, Environmental Project Officer, who will be working part time (2 days a week) in Council's Planning & Natural Resources Section. One of Allister's main tasks will be the coordination

of on-ground rehabilitation activities for the Gills Bridge Creek Rehabilitation Project. Allister is originally from the local area, and has a background in Natural Resource Management and Environmental Education. He looks forward to working with businesses and landholders for a positive outcome for the creek and local community.

Detailed Vegetation Surveying

Work has commenced on detailed vegetation surveying of the riparian zones (along the banks) of the main channel of Gills Bridge Creek and its 2 major tributaries - Green Wattle and Boat Harbour Creeks.

The aim of this detailed surveying is to identify areas of weed hot spots and also areas of important intact native vegetation. These areas will then be prioritised for management and rehabilitation based on the extent of degradation, prospects for rehabilitation, access availability and relationship with crime and anti-social behaviour in the area.



Example of intact native riparian vegetation along the upper part of Gills Bridge Creek

In an effort to value add to the vegetation survey, measures will be put in place to record animal movements through the vegetation corridors to identify what types of animals (feral, native, or both) utilise these corridors and therefore help further prioritise management and rehabilitation actions.

An independent contractor, Saltair Flora and Fauna Control have been engaged to assist Council with this surveying. Field work is expected to be complete by the end of October, with a subsequent report and prioritised recommendations produced in November, following which resources will be allocated to implement high priority on-ground works.



Bernard Whitehead of Saltair Flora and Fauna setting up monitoring equipment to detect animal movements.

Water Quality Monitoring Continues

Prior to rehabilitation works commencing Council undertook quarterly water quality monitoring of Gills Bridge Creek for approximately 18 months to gain an

understanding of any potential contaminants of concern. The results indicated water quality to be of reasonable quality, with some minor elevations of nutrients and certain metals and occasionally the detection of hydrocarbons associated with fuels and oils. The detection of these contaminants seem to be particularly present following rainfall events, suggesting stormwater runoff as a likely source.

The background water quality analysis will provide important baseline data, to which future results can be compared as rehabilitation actions progress. Water quality monitoring will continue on a quarterly basis over the coming years as the rehabilitation project takes place.

General Rubbish Clean-up



Rubbish in Gills Bridge Creek Prior to Clean-up.

A general rubbish clean-up took place within and along the banks of Gills Bridge Creek during August. Car tyres, boxes, pieces of scrap metal, electrical conduit, carpet and general household refuse was removed from the creek by Kempsey Shire Council staff. Further clean-up days may be required in the future if further rubbish hot spot areas are identified during other field investigation and on-ground works.



This program has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust



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Same section of creek following rubbish clean-up

Kempsey South Public School Continue Waterwatch Program

Kempsey South Public School have successfully completed a Junior Waterwatch Plan to continue monitoring water quality in Gills Bridge Creek. The Plan sets in place an agreement between the school and other stakeholders - Kempsey Shire Council, Landcare and Waterwatch NSW, to undertake regular waterwatch sampling events at the Creek. During late August students from Year 5 and 6 undertook another round of sampling at the Creek. In conjunction with staff from Kempsey Shire Council and Macleay Landcare Network, the students once again checked for the presence of aquatic water bugs and recorded the levels of pH, electrical conductivity, temperature and turbidity, all of which give an indication of water quality. The results obtained by the students will be uploaded on the Waterwatch NSW website and add further data to that already being collected through Council's water quality monitoring program.

What's Next?

The immediate focus will be to complete the detailed vegetation surveying of the riparian zones and identify priority areas for weed and rubbish (if encountered) removal. Following this on-ground works will commence to remove weeds and reinstate native vegetation wherever possible.

